



— State of —  
**North Dakota**  
*Office of the Governor*  
**John Hoeven**  
*Governor*

Testimony of John Hoeven  
Governor of North Dakota  
BRAC Commission Hearing  
Grand Forks, North Dakota  
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Commissioners Skinner, Bilbray and Coyle, as Commander in Chief of the North Dakota National Guard, I want to again welcome you, and want to express our appreciation for your careful consideration of the BRAC issues as they pertain to our Air National Guard unit stationed at Hector International Airport.

We North Dakotans take great pride in our military and have the highest per capita military background of any state. I stand before you representing all of the great citizens of our state who have demonstrated, in every conflict since the Spanish American War, their commitment and support to our great country through service in the military. Whether it is the Hooligan's flying over the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 or the soldiers and airman deployed since that date, we demonstrate daily our commitment and dedication.

We believe the Department of Defense recommendation to leave open both Hector and Grand Forks Air base was a correct decision based on military value, but we also believe the military value analysis for both installations was flawed. It doesn't give proper weight to significant sections of the eight specified BRAC criteria.

Specifically with regard to the recommendation to realign Hector International Airport, we request you remove Hector from the realignment list. The simple fact is that the retirement of the F-16s was a programmatic change already in place.

The Block 15 A Model F-16's at Hector are going away regardless of the BRAC process. The justification presented – that Hector ranked low in military value and that the aircraft should retire "without a flying mission backfill" – has already proven incorrect with the designation of a UAV squadron. The language "without a flying mission backfill" at a minimum must be removed from the report because it creates the inference that a flying mission at Hector may be prohibited by BRAC.

At the same time, we welcome the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) mission to North Dakota. As the Department of Defense recognizes, North Dakota offers an opportunity unique among all fifty states for both ground and airspace training and capacity. We offer the diversity of terrain, the largest available airspace in the nation, diversity of climate, and the strong support of our citizens.

The identified Predator and Global Hawk missions at Fargo and Grand Forks recognize the high military value of those bases and also demonstrate how we can work together in a joint mission capability. The combination of both Title 32 and Title 10 airmen provides the state and nation with greater flexibility to meet immediate needs.

As Commander-in Chief of our National Guard, I have very specific concerns with how the Air Guard issues are being addressed through BRAC. A strong Army and Air National Guard is crucial to our ability to respond to both local and national events. On September 11, 2001 the Hooligan's were providing air security over the Pentagon, and when the airports simultaneously needed security in our state, within 5 hours we had Air Guard personnel in place.

As a centrally located border state, North Dakota has very particular needs in the area of homeland defense, which is the primary stated goal of the national defense plan. Required National Guard assets include medics, security police, civil engineers, fireman, aviation assets, CST team, communication network, and transportation. To meet the Homeland Security needs of the state, we must have a flying mission, which will also support and enhance the UAV mission. This approach is also vitally important for recruitment. The current Air Force plan to eliminate Air Guard flying missions totally in some states is short-sighted at best and does not follow the required eight BRAC criteria.

As we move forward in our fight against terrorism and continue to fight in overseas missions, recruiting and retention has to be our primary concern. We have demonstrated that we can fill all the necessary positions. North Dakota is one of the few states that is meeting its National Guard recruiting and retention goals.

According to the Secretary's report to the BRAC Commission, the very first BRAC principle is to "Recruit and Train." "The Department must attract, develop, and retain active, reserve, civilian and contractor personnel who are highly skilled and educated and have access to effective, diverse, and sustainable training space..." North Dakota has proven that we have the ability to attract and retain the key talent that is needed.

The Department also has as a stated goal to work with the private sector to establish research, development, and testing capabilities. As stated before, the School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks will be an outstanding partner with the Air Force and the Air National Guard in the development of a UAV Center of Excellence. Also, since 2003, North Dakota State University at Fargo has been using UAV simulators for research and development to enhance UAV operation and teamwork. Both

universities will greatly enhance and support the UAV mission operated by the Air Force and our Air Guard in North Dakota.

All of these facts clearly demonstrate that North Dakota presents unique opportunities for military value not available anywhere else in the United States.